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Shifting sands : the presentation of the Persian Gulf conflict in the New York Times

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SHIFTING SANDS: THE PRESENTATION OF THE PERSIAN GULF CONFLICT IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

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ABSTRACT

SHIFTING SANDS: THE PRESENTATION OF THE PERSIAN GULF CONFLICT IN THE NEW YORK TIMES

by Thomas Gary Morlan

The content analysis examined source use before, during, and after the Persian Gulf crisis to determine whether the media's reliance on Bush administration officials increased in three successive periods: February 1 to August 1, 1990; August 2, 1990, to January 16, 1991; and January 17 to March 14, 1991. The study also examined descriptions of allied and Iraqi officials and whether opinion pieces and editorials reflected administration policy on the use of military force.

The study found that the newspaper used administration sources significantly more often in the Desert Storm period than in the Desert Shield period (X^2 [1, n = 16,874] = 138.99, p = .05). The administration's descriptions of Saddam Hussein also increased significantly in relation to other descriptions of Hussein once the war started (X^2 [1, n = 257] = 12.25, p = .05). In addition, negative descriptions of Hussein appeared significantly more frequently after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait than before it (X^2 [1, n = 486] = 12.79, p = .05). However, editorials and opinion pieces generally did not support the use of force.

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INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Iraq's takeover of Kuwait in 1990 caught American officials by surprise. The United States had helped Iraqi President Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War through loan guarantees and the sale of technology, and the flow of aid had continued up to the moment he invaded Kuwait. Suddenly, a man once regarded as an ally who could stop the expansion of the Iranian revolution was a dangerous enemy.

George Bush's description of Hussein as "worse than Hitler" and the president's assertion that the Iraqi leader was a threat to the "American way of life" received wide play in the media and helped convince a majority of the public that only force would stop the aggressor. Bush was able to overcome substantial opposition to the use of military power to oust Iraq from Kuwait in a war portrayed by U.S. officials as remarkably efficient.

Press restrictions and censorship elicited a chorus of criticism from journalists. Largely confined to "pools" with limited access to troops, media personnel were dependent on tight-lipped government spokesmen for the bulk of their information. Journalists felt they could not serve the public adequately when they had been transformed from watchdog to lapdog. Many claimed that officials sanitized the conflict, striking at the very foundation of a free press: the freedom from government influence.

The media's response was to be expected. Many journalists reacted the same way following the invasions of Panama and Grenada. It seems to take a war to bring the issue of information control to the forefront. But even in times when the nation is at peace, top officials have a tremendous influence on media content.

Journalists' dependency on such sources is the prime reason for the government's

ability to manage the news. Sigal (1973) noted that "reporters on the beat must bargain for news with sources that hold most of the chips" (p. 55), and that the higher the source's placement in government, the more likely his view will come out first and make the greatest impression. Sigal added that the convention of objectivity enhances the power of officials because it allows reporters to simply reproduce the views of a single source.

Of all potential sources, the president and those in his administration have the greatest power to disseminate views to the public. Roshco (1975) stated that news values place greater importance on the status of the person making the statement than on the validity of the statement itself.

Officials are particularly effective in shaping public perceptions about other countries (Becker, 1977). Journalists are largely dependent on briefings by the State Department or the White House when covering foreign affairs. Gans (1979) noted that American news media hew close to the State Department line on foreign news. Therefore, the presentation of other countries tends to be a reflection of administration policy.

In addition, the values of American journalists influence the content of foreign news. Gans (1979) observed that ethnocentrism is common in articles about other nations. This value is particularly evident in stories critical of leaders or countries which do not mimic American practices.

High-ranking sources have the power to confirm stereotypes of leaders who do not adhere to such practices, but at times these sources may refrain from criticizing such leaders to further policy goals. For example, the Bush administration did not direct a great deal of criticism at Hussein when the U.S. was allied with Iraq despite his deplorable human rights record (Sciolino, 1991). But when the Iraqi leader was

perceived to threaten American interests, he was cast as a villain who had to be stopped.

The power of officials to shape foreign news content reaches its peak when a nation is at war. The president's words carry even greater weight than usual, so he is able to get his views across and influence public opinion to a large degree. In addition, the tendency of the media to value their nation above all others is expressed most clearly in wartime (Gans, 1979), further distorting news content about the conflict.

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the media, specifically the *New York Times,* reflected the Bush administration's views on Iraq in three time periods: February 1 to August 1, 1990, when Iraq was a U.S. ally; August 2, 1990, to January 16, 1991, when Bush denounced Hussein and ordered troops to the gulf to counter Iraq's invasion of Kuwait; and January 17 to March 14, 1991, when Bush mobilized a huge public relations apparatus to help support Operation Desert Storm. The study will attempt to determine the extent to which the media relied on administration sources, and whether this reliance increased from one time period to the next.

In addition, the study will look at how nations and leaders involved in the conflict were described in all three time periods. This examination will touch upon how the combatants attempted to sway world opinion and how this battle was fought in the pages of the *New York Times.*

Included in the study will be an analysis of opinion pieces and editorials to see if they tended to reflect the government line on the use of military force. The study also will note how the newspaper dealt with restrictions imposed on the press by allied officials.

It is hoped that the study will shed light on the way the president and his appointees attempted to shape public perception of the Persian Gulf crisis through the media and

whether journalists readily accepted and promoted the administration's foreign policy. The relationship between the media and official sources is a potentially rewarding area of study because of its impact on news content.

In addition, the study will provide information on how the *New York Times* covered a war that involved hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops. The media's coverage of conflicts involving its citizens typically has been colored by ethnocentrism, which tends to distort the reporting of events and circumstances.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Why Journalists Use Official Sources

The Commission on Freedom of the Press (Hutchins, 1947) stated that society needs "a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning" (p. 584). But the literature indicates that journalists' dependency on official sources and the convention of objectivity make that goal difficult to achieve.

Lippmann (1922) noted that individuals often act upon pictures of the world provided by someone else. This is particularly true in the case of media personnel, who cannot predict when and where many events will take place. Sigal (1973) stressed that since "most news is not what has happened but what someone says has happened," the choice of sources is "crucial" (p. 69).

Gans (1979) found that journalists determine the suitability of sources on the basis of six major considerations: past suitability, productivity, reliability, trustworthiness, authoritativeness, and articulateness. He determined that journalists prefer sources in official positions of authority because they often meet these considerations.

The beat system also encourages reporters to congregate at government institutions, where suitable news is most likely to occur (Ettema, Whitney, & Wackman, 1987). Such a routine permits the efficient deployment of resources so the media can produce a marketable product (Roshco, 1975). The power of official sources is only enhanced by this method of gathering news.

Sigal (1973) argued that "the higher up in government a man is, the better his prospects to make news" (p. 69). Roshco (1975) concurred, noting that such sources are likely to possess information which concerns many people. As a result, the president has

no peer as an authoritative source, and the men or women he appoints to his administration have the power to disseminate his views to a broad audience.

Because of these considerations, and because reporters generally lack the technical competence to evaluate evidence, media personnel come to rely on official sources for their "facts" (Epstein, 1974). And, as Sigal (1973) noted, "from routine reliance it is but a small step to dependence" (p. 106).

In such a relationship, journalists must cooperate with sources to a great extent. Sigal (1973) explained why this is the case. If a reporter publishes something unfavorable to the source, he may be denied access to information vital to job performance. The source, on the other hand, can always gain access to the media through another reporter.

Gans (1979) found that, although journalists often are perceived to be adversaries of the government, this is not the case most of the time. "As the major source of news, (the government) is in many ways a member of the journalistic team" (p. 217).

Official and institutional sources generally are given favorable treatment. Reporters and editors usually consider them to be legitimate spokespersons, and media personnel accept administrative procedures routinely employed by official sources (Ettema et al., 1987).

It is not surprising, then, that journalists gradually absorb the perspectives of the officials they are covering. Sigal (1973) contended that "absorption culminates in beat parochialism" (p. 48), with reporters developing alliances with officials and presenting their views on a given situation.

Rivers, Schramm, and Christians (1980) also noted the tendency of the media to act as "transmission belts for compass men" (p. 278), and Gans (1979) summed up the situation as follows: "(Reporters) may not personally share the political values and

objectives of their sources, but they accept agency practices and let themselves be used to advance agency objectives" (p. 135).

The power of official sources is further enhanced by the convention of objectivity. McQuail (1984) stated that "objectivity requirements in news place a high value on higher status sources" (p. 137).

These sources are usually able to get their views across by issuing press releases or holding press conferences. Sigal (1973) noted that the "straight news convention reinforces the consequences of newsgathering routines" (p. 67) because it allows reporters to write stories based on a single point of view, so long as it is attributed.

Critics of the convention often claim that objectivity acts as a cover for repeating the government's line as fact (DeFleur & Dennis, 1981). Journalists can report the "objective truth" simply by reproducing what was said at a news conference, even though the statement itself may not be true (Ettema et al., 1987). Although such an account serves the reporter by meeting the requirement of objectivity, it also serves self-interested sources attempting to influence public perceptions.

How Government Officials Control Information

The government uses a variety of methods to manage information given to journalists. It may color a set of circumstances by including some details while leaving out others. It may choose to use propaganda to gain support for a policy. And in some cases, it may resort to outright censorship.

Roshco (1975) noted that "sources are continually deciding whether certain information should be revealed, which details should be highlighted or discarded" (p. 85). Frequently, these decisions are made not on the basis of public service, but on the basis of self-interest (Epstein, 1974).

The selective release of information is a form of propaganda, which Lasswell (1934) called "the manipulation of representations" (p. 521). Some of the most popular forms of propaganda used by government are "card stacking," which is identical to slanting; "name calling," which attempts to portray others in a negative light; and "transfer," which can be used to associate an individual or group with an easily recognized symbol (Severin & Tankard, 1979). In addition, euphemisms are frequently used to downplay occurrences which the public might perceive as being negative (McDonald, 1971).

The government also uses censorship to control the flow of information, especially in times of war. Censorship often is used in the name of national security, but there are numerous instances when it has been used not to protect the nation, but to protect the interests of sources.

Given reporters' reliance on government sources and the way these sources attempt to influence the coverage of events or circumstances, it is no wonder that Gans (1979) likened the relationship between journalist and source to a dance, with sources doing the leading. This is particularly true when media personnel must report happenings and circumstances in other countries.

Reporting on Foreign Affairs

Becker (1977) observed that "more than in any other area of news gathering, the press is dependent on governmental sources to provide focus for and information about world events" (p. 364).

Sigal (1973) was even more emphatic, stating that foreign news is what government officials say it is. He argued that their agenda will dominate the front page, and that news concerning other countries is likely to break only when it appears on the

desk of a senior official and not before then. He concluded:

> Apart from when a subject makes the news, what the *Times* and the *Post* report about it will reflect to a considerable extent what officials say about it. News is thus less a sampling of what is happening in the world than a selection of what officials think--or want the press to report--is happening. (p. 188)

Gans (1979) agreed with this assessment. He stated that journalists usually follow American foreign policy in choosing which stories to cover "because it supplies a quick and easy importance consideration and because no equally efficient model is available" (p. 149). He argued that this solution discourages State Department criticism:

> While journalists do not generally make story choices to minimize government criticism, they gain nothing by unnecessarily provoking official criticism. They know their audience is not particularly interested in foreign news and would be unlikely to support them if the government chose to attack them for harming the national interest. (p. 149)

But the power of official sources is not the only reason that media tend to reflect the government line in the matter of foreign affairs. The values of journalists themselves also play a key role in shaping the coverage of happenings in other nations.

Roshco (1975) noted that news judgment is affected by the social structure in which reporters and editors work. As a result, journalists fail to raise essential questions about the structure of society (Severin & Tankard, 1979). In fact, they accept it, and this is reflected in the coverage of foreign affairs when ethnocentrism is expressed.

Gans (1979) found that ethnocentrism is one of the enduring values in news content. He argued that this value "comes through most explicitly in foreign news, which judges other countries by the extent to which they live up to or imitate American practices and values" (p. 42). Because ethnocentrism is implicit in the messages conveyed by government officials, the media are more inclined to accept the information as being valid.

Gudykunst (1987) explained that ethnocentrism is directly related to the tendency

to stereotype people from other countries. Reporters possess limited information about foreigners, and they use stereotypes to fill the knowledge gap.

Gans (1979) expressed this concept when he stated that "many reality judgments are stereotypes, accurate or inaccurate, which journalists borrow from elsewhere because of their availability and familiarity to both journalists and the audience" (p. 201). In this light, it is easy to see why media personnel tend to accept descriptions by government officials at face value.

As receivers of information from government officials and as products of the society in which they live, the media do make preference statements about nation and society (Gans, 1979). Epstein (1974) suggested that a kind of national loyalty gets in the way of journalists and their reporting obligation.

The media's tendency to reflect the government line is thus a by-product of journalists' dependency on official sources and the fact that the two parties share common values and heritage. This reflection comes into even sharper focus in wartime.

The Government and the Press in Wartime

Reporters are particularly dependent on officials for information in times of war. Access to information, military personnel and the battlefield may be heavily restricted, often forcing journalists to repeat what was said at a press conference without any way of verifying it. The result of this type of "objective" reporting is that assertions come across as fact. In addition, expressions of ethnocentrism and national loyalty are strikingly evident in wartime news content. The result is that the public receives a distorted view of the conflict.

Mathews (1957) chronicled the growth of the government's wartime information machine, from Napoleon's issuance of communiques in the 19th century to the rapid

expansion of the public relations apparatus in World War II. He explained that eyewitness battlefield accounts were gradually replaced by news which had been filtered by an array of middlemen and a host of governmental agencies:

> The middlemen and the agencies selected, synthesized, summarized, and interpreted the news. No matter where the reader or listener resided, a great portion of the information that reached him had undergone a process of selection and refinement, whether with the purpose of hoodwinking or of enlightening him. (p. 195)

The government thus perfected its "positive role" of providing reams of information, much of it propaganda, for public consumption. In doing so, however, officials did not abandon their "negative" role of censorship. They realized that public relations and censorship complemented each other, and military officials were able to control information more effectively than they ever had before.

The "pool" system also was implemented in World War II, limiting the number of reporters on the scene. Knightly (1975) noted that, with an increasing number of military "experts" interpreting the news for the public, the correspondent found his story becoming but a small part of the finished product. He concluded that the result of such a system was the same as in a totalitarian society, in that "the public received only that news of the war which its government considered advisable to tell it" (p. 302).

Government officials attempted to control information about the Vietnam War as well, and they generally were able to portray the conflict in a positive light until the Tet Offensive in 1968. Gans (1979) argued that the national news media had largely ignored doubts about the effort until then because they had developed close ties to the government. He stated that "as a result of symbiotic relationships or co-optation, senior Washington reporters communicated the government's line on the war to their superiors in New York" (p. 135).

Once the national media began to question whether the war could be won, public

support for the effort plummeted. This put pressure on the Nixon administration to back out of the conflict. As a result, Schanberg (1991) stated, "Many politicians cling to the myth that the press, through pessimistic reporting, tipped public opinion and cost us the war in Vietnam" (p. 29).

The Reagan administration was determined to prevent the media from interfering with public support when it ordered the invasion of Grenada in 1983. The press simply was left behind, and the only accounts of the conflict were issued by government spokespersons. The invasion was labelled a success, with few details provided to the public.

Journalists complained bitterly about the denial of access to a region where American lives were at stake. The administration's reaction was to set up a Department of Defense Media Pool. This system received its first real test during the 1989 invasion of Panama.

The media, and the public, were not well served by this "new" arrangement, as Schmeisser (1991) noted:

> The military transport that flew the pool to cover the invasion was more than five hours late. . . . Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney had decided not to activate the Pentagon's new pool in time for them to reach Panama City. . . . When reporters finally arrived in Panama City, military escorts barred them from the scene of the fighting. (p. 22)

Once again, journalists heavily criticized the government for what they felt were unwarranted restrictions. Once again, the government appointed a military public affairs officer to come up with a plan for reporting on future conflicts. The Reagan-appointed spokesman argued for less military surveillance of the press and stressed the importance of media coverage of military operations. But Schmeisser (1991) stated that press leaders failed to make sure these recommendations were implemented.

The government, encountering little resistance to the concept of the pool systems,

had little reason to change this system when it began to make preparations for handling events in the Persian Gulf.

The Persian Gulf Conflict

Rowse (1991), who reviewed newspaper coverage of the Persian Gulf crisis following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, noted that the option of using force to liberate the emirate developed in stages: from the chimerical to the possible, then to the probable, and then to the absolutely necessary. He concluded that the news media played a significant role in this evolutionary process.

His study indicated that that "the papers tended to work within the parameters of news set by the government rather than reach out to sources and subjects that might have brought more balance to the picture" (p. 27). He said the result of this was that newspapers tended to follow the government line up to the outbreak of war.

The media naturally focused on the words and actions of the "ultimate source," Bush. The president used the propaganda techniques of name-calling and transfer when he referred to Hussein as "worse than Hitler" (Darwish & Alexander, 1991), and journalists naturally reported it. Rowse (1991) argued that the media carried it even further, adopting Bush's strong language as their own in describing Hussein. Rowse concluded: "In this way, they helped reduce the whole affair to what media critic Ben Bagdikian recently described as 'an exercise in name-calling that reduced the ability of either men to conduct any kind of negotiations' " (p. 27).

Sciolino (1991) noted that Bush used a variety of rationales to justify the use of force, including the protection of "our jobs, our way of life, our freedom" (p. 234). It would be hard to find a clearer expression of ethnocentrism, and those comments received wide play in the media.

Ruffini (1991) contended that while Bush's feelings on the military option were aired with great frequency in the media, anti-war voices were struggling to be heard. Ruffini quoted Bagdikian as saying that support for sanctions generally was attributed to "safe authority figures who were citing that position very strongly, such as a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff . . . and Senator Sam Nunn" (p. 26). Bagdikian concluded that if the public had been exposed to more opposing views, the vote in Congress approving military force might have been different. The Senate approved the use of force 52-47, while the House backed the president 250-183.

Once the gulf war broke out January 17, 1991, coverage of the conflict was carefully choreographed, with the Pentagon limiting reporters to pools away from the fighting and Defense Department "minders" accompanying journalists to camps to prevent spontaneous interviews with soldiers. Media personnel complained about censorship which seemed to be unrelated to issues of national security. In short, the Pentagon tried its best to prevent the release of any information which might be unpalatable to the American public and damage support for the war (Hanson, 1991).

Massing (1991) noted that reporter Malcolm Browne echoed the feelings of many journalists when he stated: "Each pool member is an unpaid employee of the Defense Department, on whose behalf he or she prepares the news of the war for the outer world" (p. 23). Massing recounted how a military censor had altered Browne's account of an interview with fighter pilots returning from combat. In one of Browne's reports, "fighter-bomber" was changed to "fighter." In another instance, a colleague's description of the pilots as "giddy" was changed to "proud."

Schanberg (1991) stated that such changes were made in the name of political security, not national security: "The 'security review' at the end of the pool process merely applies the final, harassing, delaying, cosmeticizing touches on the information

and completes the subjugation of the press corps and, by extension, the public" (p. 29).

Schanberg (1991) added that when the government didn't alter the reports of others, it generated euphemisms to avoid words that might trouble the American public. General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, referred to "minimized collateral damage" several times. In this way, he painted a picture of bombs neatly hitting their targets. The reality, of course, was that many innocent civilians were killed.

But journalists must share some of the responsibility for the sanitized version of the war conveyed to the public. Massing (1991) noted that journalists rarely pondered the extent of the killing being carried out by allied forces and failed to scrutinize the types of weapons deployed by the allies. The media constantly referred to Iraq's arsenal of chemical weapons but seemed to pay little attention to the fact that allied forces used napalm extensively to kill Iraqi troops in bunkers.

This tendency to downplay or ignore damage to the "enemy" is directly related to the value of ethnocentrism identified by Gans (1979), who flatly stated: "In wartime, (journalists) do not report news that may damage the war effort" (p. 189). Sigal (1973) agreed: "The reporter's conception of himself as a patriot still inclines him to put considerations of national interest ahead of those of news" (p. 85). Breed (1955) also concluded that patriotism is a value protected by the media.

The power of official sources, especially the president, to shape public perceptions though the use of the media is enhanced by the ethnocentric tendencies of the journalists themselves. One would therefore expect news content to reflect the administration's viewpoint on events both before and during the Persian Gulf crisis.

U.S.-Iraq Relations: Shifting Sands

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait forced Bush to abandon the policy of developing an

alliance with Hussein. The U.S. had begun to move closer to Iraq during the latter part of the Carter administration. This policy took concrete shape under Reagan and continued under Bush up to the time Iraq attacked Kuwait.

The development of closer ties between the two countries can be traced to the 1979 Iranian revolution, which robbed the United States of its closest ally in the gulf. The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who took power in February 1979, vowed to export the Islamic revolution throughout the region and referred to America as the "Great Satan." The seizure of the American embassy in Tehran in November of that year only heightened the perception that Iran would stop at nothing to destabilize the area (Darwish & Alexander, 1991).

Washington, which had long regarded Iraq as a Soviet puppet, now saw Hussein--who had also come to power in 1979--as a counterweight to Khomeini. Sciolino (1991) noted that Carter administration officials used the media to portray Iraq in a new light. On April 14, 1980, national security adviser Zbigniew Brzenski, in a much-publicized television interview, stated:

> We see no fundamental incompatibility of interests between the United States and Iraq. We feel that Iraq desires to be independent, that Iraq wishes a secure Persian Gulf, and we do not feel that American-Iraq relations need to be frozen in antagonism. (p. 163)

When Iraq invaded Iran five months later, the U.S. did nothing to stop Hussein.

U.S. policy toward Iraq changed dramatically during the Iran-Iraq war. Iraq was removed from the list of terrorist states in March 1982, opening the way for American loan guarantees and subsidies. The Reagan administration argued that Iraq no longer supported terrorists, but Sciolino (1991) stated that the real reason for the switch was to help Iraq in its war effort.

When Iran made its way into Iraq that summer, American policy-makers looked

even more favorably on Iraq, arguing that it was a secular, Western-oriented state that had begun the process of modernization. In 1983, Washington officials praised new foreign minister Tariq Aziz as a statesman, and there was talk of a "new Iraq" (Sciolino, 1991). Diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Iraq were restored in November 1984.

Iraq soon became a lively market for American businesses, and the Reagan administration pressured the government-backed Export-Import Bank to extend credits to Iraq for American-made spare parts and consumer goods.

The relationship between the two countries became even more productive in 1985, when the U.S. approved a $200 million sale of Bell 45 helicopters on the condition that they be used for civilian purposes. Sciolino (1991) stated that, from 1985 to 1990, American companies were allowed by the Commerce Department to sell $500 million in dual-use technology to Iraq.

The American government assisted Iraq in other ways. The U.S. flagged Kuwaiti tankers in July 1987 partly to ensure the flow of Iraqi oil to market. And in the latter stages of the war, the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency began to share sensitive satellite intelligence with Iraq to pinpoint Iranian targets.

American officials were so intent on tilting the balance against Iran that they quickly forgave Iraq when it attacked the U.S.S. *Stark,* killing 37 crew members. Washington accepted Iraq's explanation that the incident was a mistake, and Reagan used the media to influence public perception of the attack: "We've never considered the Iraqis hostile at all. . . . And the villain of the piece is Iran" (Sciolino, 1991, p. 68).

A cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq war was declared July 18, 1988. Shortly thereafter, Iraq focused its attention on the "enemy within," using chemical weapons on Kurdish civilians. U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz said through a spokesman that such practices were unacceptable to the civilized world. But the moment of outrage quickly

passed, and the administration successfully opposed a move in Congress to impose sanctions on Iraq (Sciolino, 1991).

Bush, who as vice president had successfully pressed the Export-Import Bank to provide hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Iraq in 1987, continued working to assist the nation when he became president in 1989. Senior officials in his administration lobbied the bank and the Department of Agriculture to finance billions of dollars in Iraqi projects (Frantz & Waas, 1992).

Later that year, Bush signed National Security Directive 26, a policy doctrine for the region that still portrayed Tehran and Moscow as the chief threats to security in the region (Sciolino, 1991). Shortly after he signed the directive, Secretary of State James Baker pressured Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter to drop his opposition to $1 billion in food credits. Half of that total was made available to Iraq at the start of 1990.

As late as the spring of 1991, senior Bush officials were insisting that Iraq be allowed to buy dual-use technology. And one month before Iraq invaded Kuwait, the State Department and the National Security Council were pushing to deliver the second half of the $1 billion in loan guarantees. Their urgings came despite evidence that Iraq had used American aid to secretly buy arms and obtain technology for its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile program (Frantz & Waas, 1992), and despite Hussein's increasingly belligerent tone.

From the early 1980s to 1990, the total value of all technology sold by American companies to Iraq was $1.5 billion. Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Agriculture was busy authorizing a total of $5 billion in loan guarantees. Based on classified documents and numerous interviews, Frantz and Waas (1992) concluded:

> It was foreign-policy initiatives from the White House and State Department that guided relations with Iraq from the early 1980s to the eve of the Persian Gulf War. . . . Bush and officials working under him played a prominent role in those

initiatives. (p. A4)

Of course, the United States' relationship with Iraq deteriorated quickly once Hussein invaded Kuwait. The leaders of both countries engaged in a battle of words which culminated in the use of military force to settle the conflict. It took little time for American forces to overwhelm Iraqi troops, yet Hussein remains in power to this day. Another chapter remains to be written on the relationship between the Iraqi leader and the U.S. administration.

Summary of the Literature

The literature review clearly indicates that journalists rely heavily on the president and his administration for news about foreign affairs, and that journalists tend to cite these sources more often than non-administration sources. The review also shows that media personnel are inclined to report such official views as fact, as well as accept the national and political values which underlie these views. In addition, the reliance on administration sources and the tendency to report from an ethnocentric perspective increase in wartime.

This study will attempt to determine the extent to which journalists relied on Bush administration sources for information about Iraq, and whether this reliance increased during the Persian Gulf crisis. It also will examine the extent to which the administration's policy on the use of military force was reflected in editorials and opinion pieces.

In addition, the study will examine how Hussein was described both before and after the invasion of Kuwait and how often the media relied on administration sources for these descriptions. Another part of the study will focus on how the United States and its allies were described during the crisis.

Finally, the study will consider how the *New York Times* dealt with press restrictions and the extent to which the newspaper joined forces with the U.S. government once Desert Storm began.

The *New York Times* is the focus of the study because it is a prestige newspaper. As such, it has an influence on how other media report foreign affairs (Cohen, 1963).

Hypotheses

Journalists rely heavily on the president and those in his administration for news about foreign affairs, so it is expected that these sources will be cited more often than other sources. It is expected that this bias will increase after the invasion of Kuwait and become most pronounced during wartime.

1) The ratio of administration sources to non-administration sources in articles on Iraq will be greater in the Desert Shield period than in the pre-invasion period.

2) The ratio of administration sources to non-administration sources in articles on Iraq will be greater in the Desert Storm period than in the Desert Shield period.

Since journalists are largely dependent on U.S. officials for news of foreign affairs, it is expected that the media will report the Bush administration's viewpoints more than alternative viewpoints. This tendency is expected to increase in wartime because of the government's control of information.

3) The ratio of the administration's descriptions of Hussein to other sources' descriptions of Hussein will be greater in the Desert Storm period than in the Desert Shield period.

The literature indicates that journalists are receptive to the government's line on

foreign affairs. Once the administration's policy shifts, it is expected that the media will reflect that shift and avoid contrary perceptions of the Iraqi leader. In addition, one would expect the value of ethnocentrism to reinforce negative descriptions of a dictator, especially when the specter of a threat to American interests is raised.

4) The ratio of negative to positive descriptions of Hussein in articles, opinion pieces, and editorials will be greater after the invasion of Kuwait than before the invasion of Kuwait.

METHODS

Focus of Study

The study is a content analysis of articles on Iraq during three time periods. This technique allows for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the content in the media studied (Berelson, 1952).

The *New York Times* is the focus of the examination. It was selected because it is a prestige newspaper which "sets the standard by which all other newspapers are measured" (Katz & Katz, 1989, p. 825). Cohen (1963) noted that the prestige press has considerable influence on how other media institutions report international affairs.

The units of analysis are articles, opinion pieces, and editorials dealing with issues involving Iraq. They are the only logical units of analysis, because a reading of the entire article is necessary to note the sources used, its position on the use of force, and descriptions of Hussein.

The newspaper was studied over three time periods: February 1 to August 1, 1990; August 2, 1990, to January 16, 1991; and January 17 to March 14, 1991.

The first period was chosen because the Bush administration still supported Hussein during this time frame. The second period was selected because it starts with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and includes the deployment of forces in the Persian Gulf. The third period was chosen because it begins with the Desert Storm operation and includes two weeks following the end of the armed conflict.

The sampling method was straightforward. In each time period, every other issue of the *New York Times* was examined for articles, opinion pieces, and editorials on Iraq. The sample size was 91 issues in the first time period, 84 in the second time period, and 29 in the third time period.

Operational Definitions

1) Administration sources: Bush, his appointees, and those who work for the appointees. Presidential and departmental spokespersons are included in this category.

2) Non-administration sources: Any sources that are not administration sources.

3) Article on Iraq: Any story other than an opinion piece or editorial which refers to Iraq, Hussein, or related issues in the headline. This includes excerpts, transcripts, and official statements.

4) Descriptions: Adjectives or connotative nouns used to describe people and actions attributed to them.

5) Opinion pieces: Signed columns appearing in the section of the *New York Times* reserved for the expression of the writer's point of view.

6) Editorials: Unsigned columns which reflect the newspaper's viewpoint.

7) Pre-invasion period: February 1 to August 1, 1990.

8) Desert Shield period: August, 2, 1990, to January 16, 1991.

9) Desert Storm period: January 17 to March 14, 1991.

Testing Method

At the beginning of the study, at least 10 percent of the content was analyzed by the researcher and another coder to establish reliability for each of the hypotheses. The following formula was utilized: Reliability = 2 (C1, C2) / C1 + C2, with the numerator being the number of category assignments upon which both coders agree, and the denominator being the total category assignments made by both coders (North, Holsti, Zaninovich, & Zinnes, 1963) .

For Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, the researcher and another coder examined 121 articles and categorized sources as either administration or non-administration. The

coders agreed on 3,628 of 3,832 total category assignments (R = 94.7).

For Hypothesis 3, the researcher and another coder examined 121 articles and categorized descriptions of Hussein as either administration or non-administration. The coders agreed on 54 of 58 total category assignments (R = 93.1).

For Hypothesis 4, the researcher and another coder examined 121 articles, 22 opinion pieces, and seven editorials. The coders agreed on 119 of 130 category assignments (R = 91.5).

A Chi-square analysis was used to determine if the following hypotheses were significant at the .05 level:

Hypothesis 1 was tested by comparing the ratio of administration to non-administration sources in the pre-invasion period to the ratio found in the Desert Shield period.

Hypothesis 2 was tested by comparing the ratio of administration to non-administration sources in the Desert Shield period to the ratio found in the Desert Storm period.

Hypothesis 3 was tested by comparing the number of times Hussein and actions attributed to him were described by administration sources to the number of times Hussein and his actions were described by non-administration sources in the Desert Shield period. This ratio was compared to the ratio found in the Desert Storm period.

Hypothesis 4 was tested by comparing the ratio of positive to negative descriptions of Hussein and his actions in the pre-invasion period to the ratio found in the post-invasion periods.

RESULTS

Hypotheses: Test Results

An analysis of the data indicated support for three of the four hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 was the only one which did not yield a significant result.

Hypothesis 1. The hypothesis that the ratio of administration to non-administration sources would be greater in the Desert Shield period than in the pre-invasion time frame was not supported. Administration sources made up 36.4% of the sources cited in the pre-invasion period and 31.6% of the sources cited in the Desert Shield time frame. Non-administration sources accounted for the remainder.

A Chi-square was utilized to determine whether the difference in the use of sources was significant when comparing the two time frames. The Chi-square of 2.38 was not significant at the .05 level for one degree of freedom.

Hypothesis 2. The hypothesis that the ratio of administration to non-administration sources would be greater in the Desert Storm period than in the Desert Shield period was supported. The Chi-square of 138.99 was significant at the .05 level for one degree of

Table 1

Source Use in Articles on Iraq

	Period		
Source	Desert Shield N = 10,416	Desert Storm N = 6,458	Total N = 16,874
Administration	32%	40	
Non-administration	68	60	

freedom (see Table 1).

Hypothesis 3. The hypothesis that the ratio of the administration's descriptions of Hussein to other sources' descriptions of Hussein would be greater in the Desert Storm period than in the Desert Shield period was supported. The Chi-square of 12.25 was significant at the .05 level for one degree of freedom (see Table 2).

Table 2

The Sources of Descriptions of Hussein in Articles on Iraq

	Period		
Source	Desert Shield N = 168	Desert Storm N = 89	Total N = 257
Administration	26%	47	
Non-administration	74	53	

Hypothesis 4. The hypothesis that the ratio of negative to positive descriptions of Hussein would be greater after he invaded Kuwait than before he seized the emirate was supported. The Chi-square of 12.79 was significant at the .05 level for one degree of freedom (see Table 3).

The Use of Sources in Articles on Iraq

Eighteen articles pertaining to Iraq were analyzed in the pre-invasion period, 787 articles were examined in the Desert Shield time frame, and 402 articles were examined in the Desert Storm period. Thus, the study encompassed 1,207 articles, including texts of official statements and excerpts from broadcasts.

Each time a statement or position was attributed to a source, it was counted and categorized as an administration or non-administration source. The total number of sources cited in the pre-invasion period was 239. The figure was 10,416 in the Desert Shield time frame and 6,458 in the Desert Storm period.

Table 3

Descriptions of Hussein in Articles, Editorials, and Opinion Pieces

	Period		
Description	Desert Shield N = 46	Desert Storm N = 440	Total N = 486
Positive	35%	14	
Negative	65	86	

In articles on Iraq, non-administration sources were cited a total of 11,123 times, making up 65% of the number of citations found in the pre-invasion, Desert Shield, and Desert Storm periods. Administration sources were cited 5,990 times, accounting for the remaining 35%.

A percentage breakdown of the types of administration and non-administration sources used is provided in Table 4.

Discussion of Table 4

Non-Iraqi foreign officials. This category consisted of foreign officials and diplomats, most of whom were from countries that opposed Iraq's takeover of Kuwait. The *New York Times* consistently reported the views of world leaders in response to

Table 4

A Breakdown of Source Use in Articles on Iraq

Source	Period			
	Pre-Invasion N = 239	Desert Shield N = 10,416	Desert Storm N = 6,458	Overall N = 17,113
Administration (total)	36.4%	31.6	40.5	35.0
U.S. officials	36.4	24.7	30.2	27.0
George Bush	0.0	4.3	4.4	4.3
U.S. soldiers	0.0	2.6	5.9	3.8
Non-Administration (total)	63.6	68.4	59.5	65.0
Non-Iraqi foreign officials	28.9	26.6	18.1	23.4
Experts and analysts	5.4	6.1	4.2	5.4
Iraqi officials	11.7	5.1	4.5	5.0
Other media	7.1	2.5	6.2	4.0
Foreign citizens	0.0	3.8	3.2	3.6
U.S. Congress Democrats	1.7	4.0	1.1	2.9
Kuwaiti citizens	0.0	1.8	2.8	2.1
Saddam Hussein	2.9	2.4	1.1	1.9
Iraqi citizens	0.0	1.6	1.7	1.6
U.S. Congress Republicans	0.4	1.4	0.8	1.2
Kuwaiti officials	0.4	1.4	1.8	1.5
U.N. officials	0.0	1.7	0.7	1.3
Other	5.0	10.2	13.4	11.3

changing circumstances in the gulf.

Experts and analysts. The *New York Times* often relied on experts and analysts to provide information on the effects of the gulf crisis and possible scenarios which might emerge. These sources included former government and military officials, as well as members of non-governmental institutions.

The two leaders. The *New York Times* cited Bush about twice as often as Hussein in the Desert Shield period and four times as often in the Desert Storm time frame (see Table 5). To determine if the disparity was significant, a Chi-square was utilized. The Chi-square of 27.81 was significant at the .05 level for one degree of freedom.

Table 5

Citations of Bush and Hussein in Articles on Iraq

	Period		
Source	Desert Shield N = 696	Desert Storm N = 350	Total N = 1,046
George Bush	64%	80	
Saddam Hussein	36	20	

U.S. soldiers. Combat troops and officers who were not acting as official spokespersons were placed in this category. These sources were counted as administration sources because their statements were subject to review by ranking officials who were following the orders of Bush-appointed officials.

Congressional sources. Congressional Democrats were cited more often than their Republican counterparts in both the Desert Shield and Desert Storm periods.

In the Desert Shield period, the *New York Times* consistently juxtaposed the views

of the Bush administration with those of opposing lawmakers, the bulk of whom were Democrats. But this attempt to balance differing outlooks hardly succeeded, given the fact that 31.6% of the sources cited in the period were administration officials.

Lawmakers from both parties were cited less frequently in the Desert Storm period. Once the war began, members of the House and Senate rallied around the cause. And the *New York Times,* because of its increased reliance on administration sources, lent its support to the cause as well.

The growth of CNN as a source. The use of other media as sources increased dramatically once the allied bombing campaign began. This was mainly due to an increase in the use of Cable News Network as a source of information. Peter Arnett was the most frequently cited reporter in the Desert Storm period, since he was allowed to remain in Baghdad while others were expelled.

Foreign citizens (excluding Kuwaitis and Iraqis). United Nations sanctions had adverse impacts on many countries that no longer could do business with Iraq. The newspaper carried numerous articles on how the gulf crisis was affecting the lives and livelihoods of citizens from foreign nations.

U.N. officials. United Nations officials were cited much more frequently in the Desert Shield period than in the Desert Storm time frame. This is because the international organization issued numerous resolutions and tried to resolve the crisis through diplomatic means prior to the outbreak of war. Once the United Nations authorized the use of force to oust Iraq from Kuwait, the United States effectively controlled the handling of the gulf crisis.

Other voices. The "other" category in the Desert Shield period was made up mainly of hostages and former hostages who were released from Iraq and Kuwait, their relatives living in the U.S., and American citizens reacting to the gulf crisis. The

"other" category in the Desert Storm time frame can be divided into two main groups: U.S. citizens with relatives fighting in the gulf, and American citizens reacting to the war.

The "U.S. Official" Paper of Record?

As the "newspaper of record," the *New York Times* frequently includes the text of official statements and excerpts from press conferences and hearings. Because of this, more space is allotted for officials to present their views than in many other newspapers. The use of this format tends to enhance the power of official sources.

Transcripts and texts were used 36 times during the Desert Shield period. U.S. officials were the source of this information 14 times, including nine statements by Bush. Iraqi officials were given expression 11 times in this format, including six statements attributed to Hussein.

Statements by American officials were used far more often than statements by Iraqi officials during the Desert Storm period. Of the 29 transcripts and texts which appeared, 19 emanated from the United States, including nine from Bush. Statements by Iraqi officials were used six times, three of which were proclamations by Hussein.

The evidence demonstrates that American officials were able to present a view unfiltered by reporters more frequently than the Iraqi government. U.S. officials dominated the public relations game most effectively during the war, when readers were exposed to the American viewpoint about three times as often as the Iraqi viewpoint.

To determine if the ratio of American statements to Iraqi statements was significantly greater in the Desert Storm period than in the Desert Shield period, a Chi-square was utilized. The Chi-square of 2.23 was not significant at the .05 level for one degree of freedom.

News Analysis Pieces: Who Does the Analyzing?

The *New York Times* featured many articles on the gulf crisis that were labeled "News Analysis." Although non-government experts and analysts were utilized in some cases, many of the articles were dependent on U.S. government sources.

The first article labeled "News Analysis" appeared August 4. "Battle for the Saudi Soul" discussed the gulf crisis in terms of a conflict between the U.S. and Iraq for influence over Saudi Arabia's oil reserves.

Experts from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the Foreign Policy Research Institute were cited four times in the first half of the article, giving the piece a flavor of independent analysis. But in the last half of the article, anonymous American officials were cited six times. In fact, an unidentified senior administration official was quoted at the conclusion of the piece.

The reliance on administration sources was repeated in an August 12 news analysis piece, "U.S. Gulf Policy: Vague 'Vital Interests.' " An American citizen was cited in the second paragraph, posing the question of why the U.S. should get involved. But after that, administration officials were cited seven times explaining the rationale for U.S. involvement in the gulf.

The *New York Times* did, however, cast a critical eye on the administration's explanations by citing an editorial cartoon at the conclusion of the article:

> The cartoon shows President Bush in the Oval Office addressing the American people. He says: "Fellow Americans, I have sent our troops to the Middle East . . . They are there to defend the security . . . the value . . . the principle we hold dear--18 miles per gallon."

But direct criticisms such as this were few and far between in news analysis pieces. Anonymous administration officials set the tone in numerous instances. Two more examples will illustrate this fact.

An article which appeared August 22, "Behind Bush's Hard Line," featured eight references to the viewpoint of an unidentified administration official. Experts from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies were cited once and twice, respectively. But the story was based mainly on assertions made by a member of the Bush administration.

Finally, an October 7 news analysis piece, "Weighing Balance Between War and Diplomacy," was far from balanced. Unidentified Bush administration officials were cited 27 times in the article, and no other sources were utilized. The arguments for and against the use of force were left in the hands of the Bush administration.

Censorship Disclaimers

Like many other news organizations, the *New York Times* operated under tight press restrictions. The newspaper printed the following disclaimer in all but five of the 21 issues sampled from January 17, when the allied air attack began, to February 26, when Bush ordered a halt to the ground campaign:

> The American-led military command in Saudi Arabia has put into effect press restrictions under which journalists are assembled in groups and given access to military sources.
> The pool reporters obtain information while under military escort, and their accounts are subject to scrutiny by military censors before being distributed. Some of the information appearing today on American military operations was obtained under such circumstances.

The disclaimer was designed to alert readers to the fact that many reports were filtered by U.S. officials. Its effectiveness is subject to question, however, when one considers that 320 articles on the gulf crisis appeared in the Desert Storm period alone. The disclaimer frequently was buried on the bottom or lost in the middle of the page, while battlefield accounts consistently received big play and dominated the front section

of the newspaper. In addition, the disclaimer did not appear at all in the following issues: January 17, January 21, January 23, February 2, and February 4.

Views on the Gulf Crisis in Editorials

No editorials on Iraq were written in the issues examined during the pre-invasion time frame. Forty editorials were noted in the Desert Shield period, and 23 appeared during the Desert Storm time frame, putting the total at 63.

Of the 31 editorials which discussed possible measures to force an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, 17 (54.8%) favored continued sanctions, while none argued in favor of the use of military force. Fourteen editorials (45.2%) discussed both options without specifically favoring either one.

Editorials repeatedly urged patience and asked the administration, "What's the rush?" A sampling of headlines is indicative of the newspaper's position on the use of force during the Desert Shield period:

- "The President And The Hasty Hawks"--August 22
- "This Embargo Can Work"--August 28
- "The Seige Is Only Eight Weeks Old"--October 1
- "America's Best Weapon: Patience"--October 21
- "Escalation, 1990s Style"--October 27
- "War? Make The Case"--November 4
- "What's Wrong With The Seige?"--November 18
- "A Weak Case For War In The Gulf"--December 2
- "War By Default"--December 16

The following statement, taken from "The Seige Is Only Eight Weeks Old," sums up the newspaper's attitude throughout the Desert Shield period: "There is no diplomatic

or military course preferable to the current strategy (sanctions)."

Editorial writers let Bush know what they thought of the buildup of U.S. forces in the gulf by calling him "hasty" on three occasions and his supporters "hasty hawks" on four others. Editorials referred to Bush as "bellicose" when he stepped up his rhetoric and "insulting" when he encouraged members of Congress to present a unified front instead of debating the issue of military force.

Once the war started, editorials stated that Bush might be considered a "war lover" if he refused to consider a peace proposal floated by Iraq. Editorials also described U.S. military officials as "capricious" because of their "relentless boasting" about successful air strikes.

Views on the Gulf Crisis in Opinion Pieces

Ten opinion pieces on Iraq were written in the six months prior to the invasion of Kuwait. That number increased to 124 in the Desert Shield period and decreased to 80 in the Desert Storm time frame. The total for all three periods was 214.

Of the 80 opinion pieces which discussed possible measures to force an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, 41 (51.3%) favored continued sanctions over force, while 18 (22.5%) argued for the use of military force. Twenty-one opinion pieces (27.5%) discussed both options without specifically favoring either one.

Occasionally, opposing views on the war option were presented on the same page. But this study demonstrates a clear tilt toward a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

At times, editorials and opinion pieces opposing the use of force appeared to be reflections of each other. The October 21 editorial, "America's Best Weapon: Patience," was preceded by an October 7 opinion piece, "Patience In The Persian Gulf, Not War," and followed by a November 2 opinion piece, "Patience Is Strength."

But the newspaper's position on the use of force to oust Hussein did not prevent it from giving expression to those who favored military action. Two writers, William Safire and Andrew Rosenthal, consistently argued that Hussein's power to make war had to be eliminated for the sake of Middle East peace. Their rationale for the use of force frequently echoed that of the Bush administration in the Desert Shield period.

The Bush administration's explanations for the rapid deployment of U.S. forces and the need to destroy Hussein were many. Bush said Hussein threatened the American way of life. Secretary of State James Baker said the conflict was about jobs. Others in the administration said the crisis was about oil.

But Safire and Rosenthal seized on two other rationales used by the administration to justify the use of force: Hussein's potential nuclear capability and what they viewed as his similarity to Hitler.

In an August 16 piece, "Iraq and Atom Bombs," Rosenthal wrote:

> Who will now guarantee that this killer, once armed with nuclear bombs for the delivery missiles he already has, will never carry out or threaten a nuclear strike? . . . A peace that leaves Saddam Hussein ever able to lift a nuclear bomb in threat would be a betrayal of all American forces that are sent now to put him down--or that will face him in the future.

In a November 12 piece, "Giving Iraq Time," Safire echoed this theme:

> Every month Iraq goes unbombed brings it a step closer to producing nuclear weapons. Once he gets his Hussein bomb, no land force no matter how powerful would dare invade; and as his Tammuz missile is perfected, he can impose nuclear blackmail on the superpowers.

In "Iraq and Atom Bombs," Rosenthal described Hussein in terms that were similar to the Bush administration's description of the Iraqi leader: "Pretending democratic friends and tyrannical enemies are the same helped bring us Hitler, Stalin and Saddam Hussein."

Safire, echoing Rosenthal, had this to say in "The Hitler Analogy," an August 24

opinion piece: "By moving quickly we can reduce the capacity of this generation's Hitler to put innocent lives at risk."

Both writers thus lent explicit support to the notion that Hussein was bent on world domination and had to be stopped. By portraying the Iraqi leader as a "Hitler with nukes," Rosenthal and Safire bolstered the argument that military force, not diplomacy, was the only way to eliminate the Iraqi threat to world peace.

The Bush Administration's Descriptions of Hussein in Articles

U.S. officials refrained from describing Hussein in negative terms prior to the invasion of Kuwait. But once Iraq made its move, the Bush administration consistently denounced Hussein and his actions (see Table 6).

Administration officials used critical words to describe Hussein 43 times during the Desert Shield period, including 18 descriptions by Bush himself. No positive terms were used in reference to Hussein.

Critical words were used to describe Hussein 44 times in the sample of issues taken during the Desert Storm period. No positive terms were used in reference to him. Bush dominated the name-calling in this period, using critical words on 26 occasions.

Given the fact that the president of the United States is a highly valued news source, it is not surprising that Bush's descriptions were cited most often among administration officials. He was the source of the word "dictator" in all but one instance and the source of the terms "Hitler" and "brutal" in every instance.

Other U.S. officials denigrated Hussein as well. General Norman Schwarzkopf had this to say about Hussein before the ground war: "He has three doctors treating him with tranquilizers, which may say something about his mental state."

And after the brief ground war, the following comment from the allied commander

Table 6

The Most Common Descriptions of Hussein by Administration Sources in Articles

	Number of Times Used		
Words	Desert Shield	Desert Storm	Total
Dictator	3	11	14
Hitler	9	2	11
Brutal	2	7	9
Threat	5	1	6
Terrorist	1	4	5
Ruthless	4	0	4
Stupid	0	3	3

appeared three times in the February 28 issue: "(Hussein is) neither a strategist nor is he schooled in the operational art nor is he a tactician nor is he a general nor is he a soldier . . . Other than that, he's a great military man."

Non-Administration Sources' Descriptions of Hussein in Articles

Because they were cited more often, non-administration sources used a greater number of critical words to describe Hussein than administration sources. But unlike U.S. officials, non-administration sources also used positive terms to depict him (see Table 7).

Critical words were used to describe Hussein 89 times and positive terms were utilized 36 times in the Desert Shield period. The Desert Storm period featured 34

Table 7

The Most Common Descriptions of Hussein by Non-Administration Sources in Articles

	Number of Times Used		
Words	Desert Shield	Desert Storm	Total
Dictator	10	5	15
Hitler	6	2	8
Crazy	3	2	5
Glutton	4	0	4
Bellicose	4	0	4
Brutal	3	1	4
Arab Leader	2	2	4
Modern-day Saladin	3	0	3
Hero	2	1	3
Arab champion	2	1	3
Savior	1	2	3
Madman	3	0	3
Repulsive	3	0	3

negative and 13 positive descriptions of Hussein in the issues sampled.

Pre-invasion articles featured few critical or positive descriptions of the Iraqi leader. On the negative side, he was described as a "warrior" twice and as "combative" once. On the positive side, he was described as a "statesman" and an "Arab spokesman"

two times each, and as an "Arab champion" once.

In all three time periods, most of the positive terms used to describe Hussein referred to him as a defender of Arab interests in the region. Many of these descriptions emanated from supporters of the Iraqi cause such as Yemen, Jordan, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, although some descriptions were made by Hussein himself.

But most non-administration sources did not look kindly on Hussein. Some of the most derogatory descriptions of the Iraqi leader ("monster," "animal," "savage") touched on his very nature.

The overall portrayal of Hussein in these articles was decidedly negative after the invasion of Kuwait. But while administration sources used critical words exclusively to describe the Iraqi leader, non-administration sources used some positive terms because they drew upon views expressed by a large segment of the Arab world.

The Bush Administration's Descriptions of Iraq in Articles

U.S. officials consistently attributed negative traits to Iraq and its military forces, particularly those in occupied Kuwait. This stream of rhetoric reinforced the portrayal of Iraq as a nation undeserving of sympathy (see Table 8).

Prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, members of the American administration refrained from criticizing Iraq. A State Department report which included Iraq on the list of nations sponsoring terrorism was cited once. No other negative description of the nation emanating from U.S. officials was found in the issues sampled in this period.

The tone of articles on Iraq changed dramatically after the nation forcibly annexed Kuwait. Bush administration officials used critical words to describe Iraq and its actions on 37 occasions in the Desert Shield period. Bush himself used such terms 16 times.

Administration sources utilized just 10 critical words to describe Iraq in the Desert

Table 8

The Most Common Descriptions of Iraq by Administration Sources in Articles

	Number of Times Used		
Words	Desert Shield	Desert Storm	Total
Brutal	8	4	12
Enemy	0	10	10
Cruel	0	10	10
Terrorist	1	6	7
Threat	5	0	5
Intransigent	1	2	3

Storm period, but they were used a total of 37 times. Bush used these words eight times.

Following the Iraqi takeover of Kuwait, Bush utilized the word "brutal" eight times and referred to Iraq as "evil" and "vicious." Other U.S. officials referred to the nation as "inhumane" and "barbaric," and one had this to say about Iraqi troops: "They're not part of the human race."

Non-Administration Sources' Descriptions of Iraq in Articles

Non-administration sources described Iraq and its actions in harsher terms than administration sources in the pre-invasion period (see Table 9). Critical words were used nine times in the issues sampled.

Non-administration sources were kinder to Iraq than administration sources in the

Desert Shield period, although the overall portrayal still was mostly critical. Words with negative connotations were used 56 times to describe Iraq, while positive terms were applied on 10 occasions.

During the Desert Storm time frame, 18 negative and 19 positive descriptions of Iraq were found in the issues sampled. The period featured more positive descriptions of Iraq than negative ones for two reasons: U.S. officials directed their criticism at Hussein personally, and Hussein stepped up his effort to portray his nation in glowing terms.

Table 9

The Most Common Descriptions of Iraq

by Non-Administration Sources in Articles

	Number of Times Used			
Words	Pre-Invasion	Desert Shield	Desert Storm	Total
Brutal	2	8	0	10
Terrorist	2	1	3	6
Ruthless	2	2	2	6
Enemy	0	3	2	5
Threat	0	4	0	4
Illegal	0	3	0	3

Non-administration sources also referred to Iraq as a "predator state," "pirate regime," and "police state." In contrast, the Iraqi leader described his country as "peace-loving" and as "heroes" two times each. Hussein also used religious imagery to cast his country in a favorable light. This will be discussed in a separate section.

Descriptions of Bush in Articles

Hussein and his supporters frequently launched verbal attacks at the United States and its allies. Many of these attacks were directed at Bush personally (see Table 10).

An examination of specific descriptions of Bush in the Desert Shield period reveals 20 negative descriptions and five positive ones. The Desert Storm time frame featured 11 negative and four positive descriptions of Bush.

Table 10

The Most Common Descriptions of Bush by Sources in Articles

	Number of Times Used		
Words	Desert Shield	Desert Storm	Total
Arrogant	4	0	4
Courageous	1	2	3
No good	2	0	2
Wise	0	2	2

In the Desert Shield period, Hussein was directly quoted as saying that Bush was "like Hitler" and a "liar." Positive terms applied to Bush by others included "principled," "decisive," and "one of the greatest presidents ever."

In the Desert Storm period, Bush was labelled an "assassin," a "scoundrel," and a "madman who suffers from megalomania."

Hussein also resorted to religious imagery to cast the American president in a negative light.

Descriptions of the U.S. and Its Allies in Articles

World opinion may have been tilted against Iraq, but that did not prevent the *New York Times* from printing a wide assortment of negative descriptions of the U.S. and its allies (see Table 11). Most of these descriptions came from Iraq and its supporters.

Table 11

The Most Common Descriptions of the U.S. and Its Allies by Sources in Articles

	Number of Times Used		
Words	Desert Shield	Desert Storm	Total
Imperialist	5	17	22
Evil	5	11	16
Enemy	5	10	15
Arrogant	6	4	10
Tyranny	3	5	8
Cowards	0	8	8
Aggressive	8	0	8
Colonial	0	6	6
Greedy	3	2	5
Corrupt	4	1	5
Malicious	0	4	4
Traitors	0	4	4

In the Desert Shield period, critical words were used to describe the U.S. and its

allies in 92 instances, including 36 times by Hussein. The period included 14 positive descriptions of the allied forces.

One hundred fifty-four negative and eight positive descriptions of the allies appeared in the Desert Storm period, as Hussein tried to counter the military assault with a verbal barrage.

The most common positive description was "good," which was used three times. Other words used to describe the allies included "brave," "noble," and "moral." The terms "inspirational," "remarkable," and "dignified" were employed to describe Kuwaiti troops. In general, the positive terms emanated from allied officials.

Descriptions of Hussein in Opinion Pieces

Opinion writers in all three time frames portrayed Hussein in a negative light, especially during the Desert Shield and Desert Storm periods (see Table 12).

In the pre-invasion time frame, 27 critical words and 11 positive terms were used to describe the Iraqi leader. The Desert Shield period featured 191 critical words and just eight positive ones. The Desert Storm time frame included 63 negative and six positive descriptions.

While descriptions of Hussein were few and far between in news articles written during the pre-invasion period, opinion writers had plenty to say about the controversial Iraqi leader. The writers were free to speak their minds. Unlike the Bush administration, columnists were not trying to "moderate" Hussein's behavior.

Safire was Hussein's harshest critic, referring to the Iraqi leader as the "Butcher of Baghdad" four times. Safire wondered why the Bush administration wasn't more outspoken in denouncing Hussein for a variety of widely deplored acts: "What hold does the Butcher of Baghdad have on the President of the United States?"

Safire asked in a March 19 opinion piece, "A Dangerous Thing."

The few positive descriptions of Hussein included "latter-day Saladin," "Arab hero," "savior of the Arab world," and an "Arab David" standing up to "Goliath," the allied forces. But in general, opinion writers reflected the attitude of the Bush administration and many world leaders in the Desert Shield period.

Table 12

The Most Common Descriptions of Hussein in Opinion Pieces

	Number of Times Used			
Words	Pre-Invasion	Desert Shield	Desert Storm	Total
Dictator	3	33	6	42
Hitler	0	16	5	21
Ruthless	3	11	0	14
Murderer/Killer	1	7	4	12
Tyrant	1	7	3	11
Brutal	0	8	1	9
Threat	0	7	2	9
Dangerous	2	5	1	8
Evil	0	2	4	6
Terrorist	1	1	3	5
Butcher of Baghdad	2	2	0	4
Menace	2	2	0	4
Vicious	0	1	3	4

Hussein often was described as something not quite human. Terms applied to him included "monster," "mad bull," "creature," and "inhuman." And on two occasions, he was referred to simply as a "bad guy."

Descriptions of Iraq in Opinion Pieces

Although opinion writers reserved most of their criticism for Hussein personally, they also described Iraq and its military forces in critical terms in all three time periods.

The pre-invasion period featured three descriptions of the nation, all of them negative: "murderous," "dangerous," and "corrupt." In the Desert Shield period, 13 critical descriptions and two positive ones were used to depict the country and its troops. Soldiers in occupied Kuwait were described as "brutal," "barbaric," and "uniformed goons." The nation's political structure was subject to criticism as well: Iraq was compared to "Nazi Germany" and called a "dictatorship" and a "totalitarian hellhole."

The positive descriptions appeared in a piece written by Senator Robert Dole, who appealed to Hussein to withdraw shortly before the January 15 deadline. He referred to Iraq as a "great nation" and its citizens as a "great people."

Opinion writers used critical words to describe Iraq 10 times in the Desert Storm period, with the most common description being "enemy." The political structure again was criticized through the use of the words "totalitarian" and "fascist."

Descriptions of the U.S. and Its Allies in Opinion Pieces

Specific descriptions of the United States and its allies were almost entirely negative in opinion pieces written during the Desert Shield and Desert Storm periods (see Table 13). Most of the descriptions cited by writers emanated from Iraq and its supporters, although some descriptions came from the writers themselves.

Opinion pieces in the Desert Shield period featured 39 negative descriptions and five positive ones. Desert Storm opinion pieces featured 19 negative and nine positive descriptions of the U.S. and its allies. Many of the negative descriptions came from guest columnists who were expressing the views of Iraq and its supporters.

Table 13

The Most Common Descriptions of the U.S. and Its Allies in Opinion Pieces

	Number of Times Used		
Words	Desert Shield	Desert Storm	Total
Imperialists	7	2	9
Tyrannies	2	2	4
Warlike	4	0	4
Corrupt	2	1	3
Arrogant	2	0	2

Bush himself was described as "warlike" in four instances and as "menacing," "crazy," and "ruthless."

New York Times columnist Russell Baker, an opponent of the military buildup in the gulf, described the president as "Attila the Yale man." Guest columnist Martin Walker criticized the president for focusing on Iraq instead of directing attention at the changes taking place in the Soviet Union: "(Bush is) a man in the jungle ignoring the charge of the rhino to kick a snarling jackal."

Positive terms used to describe the allies included "competent," "intelligent," and

"politically sensitive." Bush was praised for being "steadfast."

Descriptions of Hussein in Editorials

Editorial writers for the *New York Times* refrained from describing Hussein in the pre-invasion period. In fact, no editorials on Iraq appeared in the issues sampled during this time frame.

The Desert Shield period included 31 negative descriptions of the Iraqi leader and no positive ones. The Desert Storm period featured 22 negative descriptions of Hussein and three positive ones (see Table 14).

Table 14

The Most Common Descriptions of Hussein in Editorials

	Number of Times Used		
Words	Desert Shield	Desert Storm	Total
Dictator	6	4	10
Tyrant	2	3	5
Terrorist	0	3	3
Brutal	2	1	3
Ruthless	2	0	2
Lawless	2	0	2
Cruel	2	0	2
Bully	2	0	2
Unscrupulous	1	1	2

His attitude toward those under his rule was described as follows: "(He is) not a ruler who will surrender merely to spare his countrymen unnecessary pain."

The *New York Times* also depicted Hussein as lacking human traits, using the words "savage" and "demonic" in its editorials.

Positive descriptions occurred when the newspaper cited the views of a few Arab nations: Hussein was called "Saladin," "the Palestinians' great liberator," and a "hero to the hopeless."

Descriptions of Iraq in Editorials

Editorial writers subjected Iraq as a nation to criticism following the invasion of Kuwait. Eleven negative terms were used to describe the country, including "brutal" and "heartless." Its political structure was described as a "tyranny."

Seven critical words were used to describe the country in the Desert Storm period, including "enemy," "noxious," and "barbarous." The only positive term applied to Iraq, "brother," came from one of the nation's few Arab supporters.

Iraq's Use of Religious Symbolism in the Persian Gulf Crisis

Iraqi officials used religious imagery to cast the allied effort in a negative light and to portray Iraq's struggle as righteous (see Table 15). They adopted this strategy in an attempt to unite the people of Iraq and the Arab nation against the "infidels."

Iraq's use of religious terminology increased dramatically in the Desert Storm period. The attempt to draw Israel into the conflict was reflected by constant references to the "Zionist" threat. In addition, three of Hussein's references to "Satan" were directed at Bush personally.

But Iraq's attempt to turn the conflict into a holy war was unsuccessful. Israel

Table 15

The Most Common Religious Descriptions of the U.S. and Its Allies by Iraq

	Number of Times Used		
Words	Desert Shield	Desert Storm	Total
Zionists	0	27	27
Infidels	2	7	9
Athiests	2	3	5
Defilers of holy places	4	0	4
Satan	0	4	4
Enemies of God	1	1	2

remained on the sidelines despite Hussein's Scud missile attacks on civilian targets. And allied officials, including Bush, were careful to avoid the use of religious terminology.

In addition, U.S. forces were ordered to avoid situations in which their Christian worship would stand out in a Muslim world. A December 22 article, "Out of Saudi View, U.S. Force Allows Religious Their Rites," included the following passage:

> Outside of war plans, perhaps no subject is treated by Defense Department officials here with such sensitivity and secrecy as that of religion. . . . The idea, they say, is to avoid any offense to the religious leaders of Saudi Arabia, a nation that recognizes only one faith: Islam.

Although members of the U.S. military were allowed to practice their religions discreetly, the American government was so afraid of inflaming Arab public opinion that it described worship services as "fellowship meetings" and chaplains as "morale

officers." Reporters, meanwhile, were barred from observing any religious services on American military installations and were routinely refused interviews with chaplains.

U.S. officials realized that Hussein was trying to wage war on a religious front. They did their utmost to avoid falling into this trap, as illustrated by the following remark by an official of the Defense Department in the December 22 article:

> Can't you see Hussein getting videotape of a Hanukkah service or of soldiers singing "Silent Night" and running it on TV over and over again, and arguing that the Islamic holy places are being defiled? It would be garbage, of course, but it would be dangerous for everyone.

The New York Times: At War With Iraq?

Although the *New York Times* was consistently opposed to the use of military force against Iraq, the newspaper displayed ethnocentric tendencies soon after the air campaign began.

During the Desert Storm period, the *New York Times* referred to Iraq as the "enemy" on 39 occasions when neutral terms could have been used. On January 31 alone, the newspaper described Iraq as the "enemy" eight times.

The word was used mainly as an adjective (enemy troops, enemy air strength, enemy lines), but it was also used as a noun ("the enemy penetrated about two miles into Saudi Arabia before being repulsed"). Usage of the term was most common in battlefield accounts given by military officials.

The Reporting of Alleged Iraqi Atrocities

As Knightly (1975) noted, stories of atrocities committed by the "enemy" have appeared frequently in the media. Such accounts help to galvanize public opinion against the perpetrators of the alleged crimes. In this respect, the Persian Gulf war was no different than past wars. The *New York Times* printed numerous reports of alleged

Iraqi abuses in Kuwait, and these accounts were used by the Bush administration as a justification for war.

In a September 29 article, "Sacking of Kuwait is Pressuring U.S.," Bush's national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, said Iraqi abuses in Kuwait were shortening the time that the U.S. could wait for economic sanctions to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait: "There's no question that what's happening inside Kuwait affects the timetable." In the same article, Bush said: "Iraqi aggression has ransacked and pillaged a once peaceful and secure country, its population assaulted, incarcerated, intimidated and even murdered."

An October 17 article, "Kuwaitis Tell of New Round of Terror," provided eyewitness accounts of alleged atrocities. One of the most striking accounts was provided by refugee Ismail al-Shatti: "Two boys from the Salem family, aged 17 and 18, were . . . shot in front of their mother and sisters, who were hysterical."

In the same article, Abdulrahman al-Awadi, a member of the Kuwaiti government in exile, said: "Killing is very easy for (Iraqi troops). It suffices to find a picture of the Emir in a home or, worse, a pamphlet, for the person to be taken away, tortured, interrogated and then maybe executed."

He also told of how Iraqi troops had searched a house and found a Koranic verse along with a picture of the Emir. The official said the Iraqis grabbed the head of the household and

> started banging his head on the wall until it was smeared with blood while his young children tugged at their trousers pleading for them to stop. One soldier turned around and smacked a child so hard, the boy rolled on the floor several feet away.

A December 2 article, "New Kuwait Refugees Tell of Iraqi Killings and Rapes," was particularly vivid in its description of alleged misdeeds. An unidentified Kuwaiti

doctor who had fled said: "The incidence of rape is now increasing in a pattern that seems to be repeated, like a contagious disease." Refugee Abdul Nabib, a double amputee, provided this account: "The Iraqi soldiers came into my hospital room and took my artificial limbs. I told them I needed them for walking, but they didn't pay me any attention."

An assertion which received wide circulation was that Iraqi soldiers had killed 300 infants in Kuwaiti hospitals. This account was not disproved until February 28, after the allies had retaken Kuwait.

In a December 16 article, "Atrocities by Iraqis in Kuwait: Numbers Are Hard to Verify," the newspaper reported the disparity between the number of atrocities claimed by Kuwait and its supporters and the number claimed by independent human rights groups. The Kuwaiti government asserted that 7,000 Kuwaitis had been killed and another 25,000 arrested or detained. Middle East Watch, on the other hand, put the death toll at about 1,000 and arrests and detentions at 5,000, and Amnesty International said its figures were roughly similar.

The reporter had this to say about the disparity:

> The vast discrepancies in the estimates have given rise to suspicions among some human rights monitors that abuses are being exaggerated, consciously or not, for political gain. Several human rights monitors said in interviews that they believed that the Bush Administration and Kuwait and its supporters are relying on reports of atrocities to help counter lawmakers, former government officials and foreign policy analysts who favor waiting for economic sanctions to force Iraqi soldiers out of Kuwait.

Bush did, in fact, cite the alleged atrocities numerous times to bolster his argument for the use of military force. Shortly before the January 15 deadline, for instance, he distributed a letter to college newspapers which spoke of "atrocities" and painted the conflict between the allies and Iraq as "good versus evil." By focusing on alleged

atrocities, Bush argued that the U.S. had a "moral obligation" to rescue the Kuwaiti people.

Hussein' s Attempts to Sway Public Opinion

Hussein tried to generate sympathy for his plight by making numerous allegations against the allies in both the Desert Shield and Desert Storm periods. Some of the accusations received substantial coverage in the *New York Times,* but Hussein's public relations efforts were not enough to crack the allied coalition.

In a December 4 article, "Iraq Asserts That 1,400 Children Lacking Medicine Have Died," Iraq tried to weaken support for international trade sanctions. Baghdad radio also quoted the Iraqi health minister as saying that there was a shortage of powdered milk, and that this jeopardized the health of Iraqi children. The reporter noted that there was no way to verify these claims. He added that food and medicine were specifically exempted from the sanctions.

The assertions were repeated in a December 24 article, "Doctors Who Visited Iraq Say Embargo Hurts Civilians." Iraqi doctors told American physicians visiting Baghdad that "the embargo's main effects were on children."

During the Desert Storm period, the *New York Times* printed Iraqi government claims of civilian casualties allegedly caused by allied air attacks. On January 29, Baghdad reported that hundreds of civilians had been killed and 416 wounded in the bombing campaign. The article, "Iraq Says Air Raids Have Killed 324 Civilians," quoted a letter from Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz which spoke of "deliberate and brutal attacks launched on behalf of the United States by the forces of the criminal Zionist-imperialist alliance on civilian, humanitarian, medical, cultural and religious targets and on citizens and families in all parts of Iraq."

On February 12, the newspaper reported an Iraqi claim that "thousands" of civilians had been killed in the air raids.

An event which received widespread coverage and generated controversy was the alleged destruction of an air raid shelter which killed hundreds of civilians. Articles appearing in the *New York Times* on February 14 provided vivid accounts of the deaths, and a news analysis piece stated that Bush was "confronting the prospect that civilian casualties in Iraq could threaten international support for the continuing bombing campaign."

But the newspaper also gave ample play to allied claims that the target was a command center. These claims, along with assertions that Hussein might have placed the civilians in jeopardy on purpose, were enough to diminish the public outcry. The air campaign continued until the outbreak of the ground war a short time later.

Television accounts of the alleged attack on the air raid shelter featured grisly footage which evoked sympathy for Iraq and called into question the allied strategy. But by and large, the television was not kind to Hussein.

The Iraqi leader's interviews with the hostages, which he called "guests," cast him in an unfavorable light during the early stages of the gulf crisis. The picture of Hussein smiling and affectionately stroking a grim-faced boy's head was viewed as repugnant in the West.

In an August 30 article, "Why the Tube Can Be Hussein's Worst Enemy," the *New York Times'* television critic stated: "Something there is that doesn't love a dictator--and that something may be television."

Unlike Bush and members of his administration, Hussein was not schooled in the ways of televised public relations. His attempts at using the media were clumsy and awkward compared to the slick productions put on by Bush and company.

As the television critic stated: "In trying to use television to capture the hearts and minds of the world, the Iraqi ruler has displayed the limitations of a man who has never had to compete in the open political combat common in the West."

Descriptions of the Kuwaiti Government

As noted above, Iraq's political system was subject to criticism in all three time frames examined. Writers tended to focus on the fact that it did not mimic American political practices.

Kuwait's non-democratic government also came under fire for not adhering to democratic principles, but it was cast in a negative light far less often than Iraq. And unlike Iraq, Kuwait was never described as a dictatorship, and its leader was never referred to as a dictator.

Not surprisingly, Hussein was the source of many negative descriptions of Kuwait, referring to the government as "corrupt" three times in September. And in a November 16 article, "Hussein Offering to Talk With U.S.," he asked ABC news anchor Peter Jennings why the United States was defending a wealthy oligarchy:

> Is it that the United States wants the ruler of Kuwait to live long enough so that he may add another $60 billion to his personal wealth that he took from the wealth of his people? This is the kind of example that Mr. Bush is trying to defend.

But even Bush admitted in a September 25 article, "U.S. Views Threat by Iraq as Strategy to Split Critics," that Kuwait's political structure left a lot to be desired: "Iraq is no model of democracy, nor is Kuwait. That isn't the question here. The question is international law and respect for one's neighbor."

That didn't convince many opponents of military force that Kuwait was worth saving. One protester on October 21 termed Kuwait an "oppressive regime." And on January 11, Senator Daniel Moynihan referred to the gulf crisis in the following manner:

"A nasty little country invaded a littler, but just as nasty, country."

Opinion writers also noted the less-than-respectable nature of Kuwaiti society. Though he supported the war, Rosenthal described the government as a "feudal tyranny."

The most biting criticism of Kuwait appearing on the opinion page was launched by Germaine Greer in a November 14 article, "Our Allies, the Slave Holders." He criticized the U.S. for rushing to the defense of what he termed a "repellent" society:

> We are sending our finest to defend the 8.6 percent of the total Kuwaiti population of three million or so who are allowed the rights of citizenship, namely the male descendants of males resident in Kuwait in 1920. We are risking a war that could poison the planet at the same time as it scuttles our precarious economy, to restore an idle and luxurious life style that depends upon the daily humiliation and degradation of hundreds of thousands. And we are taking the slave owners' money for doing it.

The *New York Times* ran articles on the nature of the Kuwaiti government in both the Desert Shield and Desert Storm periods. An October 13 article, "Kuwaiti Exiles Reunite in an Imperfect Harmony," described the efforts of members of the Kuwaiti "constitutional movement" to restore a freely elected legislature and a free press. Both had been suspended by the Emir in 1986.

Nevertheless, Bush consistently referred to Kuwait's government as "legitimate" and said at the outset of Desert Storm: "The liberation of Kuwait has begun." And when the allies had driven out Iraq's occupying forces, the president portrayed the victory as a triumph for freedom: "Kuwait is liberated. . . . Kuwait is once more in the hands of Kuwaitis in control of their own destiny. . . . Tonight, the Kuwaiti flag once more flies above the capital of a free and sovereign nation."

In a March 8 article, "Kuwaiti Prince Says Martial Law May Last for More Than 3 Months," Crown Prince Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah said: "Our country is not a dictatorship--you all know that. We are a democratic country. We favor the principles of

democracy."

But two days later, when asked when democracy would be re-instituted, the crown prince replied: "I am not going to fix a date now."

The March 10 article, "Kuwaiti Leaders Tell Baker Democratization Is Coming," also featured an assertion by the Emir that he was "absolutely" in favor of a democratic government. But when asked if women would be allowed to vote, he replied: "It is not in the Constitution so far, but there is always the possibility to think about it in the future."

5

DISCUSSION AND IDEAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

An Examination of the Results in Relation to the Literature

Hypotheses. The media's tendency to rely on official sources for information about foreign affairs is well documented in the literature. Three of the four hypotheses in this study were supported, providing further evidence of this tendency.

The *New York Times*' use of American officials as sources increased significantly in the Desert Storm period, supporting Hypothesis 2. In addition, the ratio of the Bush administration's descriptions of Hussein to alternative descriptions of the Iraqi leader increased significantly in wartime, supporting Hypothesis 3. The literature indicates that the media become more reliant on officials in wartime, and that this dependency is enhanced by the government's control of information. This study confirms those observations made in the literature.

The overall portrayal of Hussein was much less favorable after Iraq invaded Kuwait than before the takeover, supporting Hypothesis 4. This finding reinforces contentions in the literature that the American media are wary of dictators and tend to reflect the U.S. government line.

The *New York Times* cited U.S. administration sources less often in the Desert Shield period than in the pre-invasion period, so Hypothesis 1 was not supported. However, source use was not significantly different in the two time frames.

The power of U.S. officials. The literature indicates that media personnel are largely reliant on American officials for news about foreign affairs, and a large percentage of the sources cited in the study were members of the Bush administration. But because the *New York Times* has the financial resources to staff bureaus in many nations and send reporters overseas, the majority of the sources cited were from outside

the U.S. administration.

Nevertheless, a large percentage of non-administration sources were foreign government officials, the vast majority of whom tended to echo the U.S. administration's stance. Thus, news accounts were inherently biased and tended to portray Iraq in a negative light. The *New York Times* may have accurately reflected world opinion, but the newspaper gave much more play to the allied perspective than to Hussein's argument that Kuwait was a province of Iraq.

This was particularly true in the case of news analysis pieces. While it is true that the *New York Times* sometimes turned to independent analysts and experts to interpret unfolding events in the gulf crisis, the newspaper often let anonymous U.S. officials do the analyzing. These sources let readers catch a glimpse of what was going on behind the scenes at the White House, but the information was not given to serve the public's "right to know." Administration sources essentially used the *New York Times* as a mouthpiece to present filtered, self-interested viewpoints.

These viewpoints also appeared in the form of official texts and transcripts of press conferences. The literature notes that the convention of objectivity allows the media to publish stories based on a single point of view, so long as it is attributed. It would be hard to find a more striking example of repeating the government line than the publication of official statements.

The literature also suggests that reporters' reliance on American officials increases in times of war. This study confirms that supposition, since the *New York Times* was much more reliant on U.S. officials for information in the Desert Storm period than in the Desert Shield period. It is not surprising that the use of statements from American officials increased once the war started.

The government's control of the press in wartime. As noted above, those who read

the *New York Times'* coverage of Operation Desert Storm were inundated with official views on how the conflict was progressing. Detailed accounts of the allied bombing campaign and subsequent ground attack dominated the most prominent parts of the newspaper.

Given these considerations, it is highly doubtful that a two-paragraph censorship disclaimer was enough to counter the impressions which American officials left upon readers. Throughout the Desert Storm period, official sources portrayed the conflict as remarkably clean and efficient. The literature suggests that information was controlled in this manner to sanitize the war to keep it palatable for the American public. Aside from a few reports emanating from the Iraqi government, the *New York Times* fell in line and printed little which might "damage the war effort" (Gans, 1979).

Presidential powers. The literature indicates that the U.S. president is a highly valued source, and this study lends support to that notion. The *New York Times* cited Bush far more frequently than Hussein, and this tendency increased significantly once the U.S. shifted from Desert Shield to Desert Storm.

One reason for the disparity might lie in the fact that Bush had more access to the media than Hussein, especially once the war began. The Iraqi leader's channels of communication were sharply limited by the constant allied attack.

Another reason for the disparity might be more subtle: Perhaps media personnel demonstrated a bias in favor of Bush because of ethnocentric tendencies. The literature indicates that, because reporters share common values and heritage with American officials, they tend to reflect the government line. This could have been the case during the Persian Gulf crisis.

Independence from the administration viewpoint. The literature indicates that journalists tend to absorb the views of U.S. officials, especially in times of war. But an

examination of the editorials in both the Desert Shield and Desert Storm periods reveals a questioning, critical press whose views often ran contrary to those of the Bush administration. The newspaper also published far more opinion pieces which argued against the use of force than pieces favoring the war option.

The very nature of editorials and opinion pieces could account for the *New York Times'* opposition to Bush administration policy in this part of the newspaper. Editorial and opinion writers are different from reporters in that they tend to interpret events from a distance instead of having direct contact with sources. Thus, editorial and opinion writers are less subject to "beat parochialism" (Sigal, 1973, p. 48) than reporters.

Descriptions of the combatants. Not surprisingly, the descriptions of Hussein and Iraq were decidedly more negative after the invasion of Kuwait than before the takeover. The media reported hundreds of descriptions from both administration and non-administration sources.

Administration sources used negative terms exclusively when describing Hussein and Iraq, and U.S. officials were able to present these descriptions more frequently once the war began. This finding is supportive of the literature, which indicates that reporters become more dependent on American officials in times of war.

In addition, the values of American journalists likely had an effect on the way Hussein and Iraq were described. The literature suggests that the media tend to be critical of countries which do not adhere to American political practices. Gans (1979) noted that "foreign news suggests quite explicitly that democracy is superior to dictatorship, and the more so if it follows American forms" (p. 43). An examination of the *New York Times* and its descriptions of the Iraqi government reveals the media's ethnocentric tendency.

But the fact remains that Iraq consistently was referred to as a "police state" and a

"dictatorship," while Kuwait was spared such unsavory descriptions. Part of the reason for this lies in the fact that one of the newspaper's chief sources, the Bush administration, limited its criticism of the Kuwaiti government. U.S. officials did not want to say anything to erode public support for the war effort.

The newspaper did, of course, print hundreds of negative descriptions of the United States and its other allies. Many of these descriptions came from Iraqi officials, whom the *New York Times* quoted in an attempt to provide balanced coverage of the gulf conflict. The newspaper also allowed Hussein to use religious symbolism to try and inflame the Arab world against the allies.

But this study reveals that a greater number of critical terms were used to describe Hussein and Iraq than to describe Bush and the allies. This is a direct result of the media's tendency to quote American officials. This tendency is enhanced by reporters' ethnocentrism and the government's tight control of information in wartime, both of which are noted in the literature.

Hussein's attempts to alter public perceptions also failed because he did not have the experience in public relations that U.S. officials possessed. As the literature notes, American officials have been honing their propaganda and censorship skills since at least World War II. Hussein, who tended to repeat negative descriptions until they had lost their effect, was no match for American officials.

The enemy. Perhaps the most striking display of ethnocentrism by the *New York Times* occurred when the newspaper repeatedly referred to Iraq as "the enemy."

Gans (1979) noted that ethnocentrism is most clearly expressed in wartime: "While reporting the Vietnam War, the news media described the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front as 'the enemy,' as if they were the enemy of the news media" (p. 41).

In this instance, it appears that the *New York Times* did, in fact, absorb the perspectives of officers who were relaying information to the media. As Gans (1979) noted, reporters often reveal where their sympathies lie when American lives are at stake. The result of such repeated descriptions is a portrayal of Iraqi forces as faceless foes instead of human beings caught in a struggle not of their own making.

Accounts of atrocities. The convention of objectivity noted in the literature resulted in the publication of numerous atrocities alleged to have taken place in Kuwait. Many of the accounts were attributed to a single source and lacked corroborating evidence to support the claims.

As the *New York Times* noted December 16, 1990: "Atrocity reports involving occupied territories have frequently been incorrect. In 1914, for example, the Germans were falsely accused by the Allies of murdering Belgian babies at the outset of World War I."

The convention of objectivity also resulted in the publication of Iraqi claims of civilian casualties. In these instances, the *New York Times'* coverage ran counter to what would be expected. The literature suggests that American newspapers avoid reporting events which might harm the war effort.

Nevertheless, the newspaper published stories about alleged atrocities in Kuwait at a time when the American public was forming an opinion about events in the gulf. By the time Hussein responded with atrocity stories of his own, Americans had little sympathy for Iraq's plight.

Media Coverage of International Conflicts: Significant Findings

This study reinforces a large body of media theory about the power of official sources to shape public perception of world events, although it shows that editorial and

opinion writers may be freer to express an independent viewpoint. It also explores areas of wartime reporting that have not received a great deal of attention. Finally, the study clearly demonstrates that the *New York Times*, despite its immense resources, may be more susceptible to government influence than papers of a lesser stature.

Although a significant body of literature pertains to the media's dependence on official sources, content analyses on the subject are far less numerous. This study demonstrates how frequently American and foreign officials are used as sources in foreign affairs reporting.

The study also sheds light on another topic that has received scant attention from researchers: how the use of official sources changes from peacetime to wartime. The evidence shows that media personnel are even more dependent on official sources once war breaks out. Despite outcries from journalists following the invasions of Panama and Grenada, the U.S. government in Desert Storm continued to restrict access to information which would have given American citizens a more accurate portrayal of events in the gulf.

Polls indicating that the majority of U.S. citizens support such restrictions likely will encourage the government to continue restricting access to military information. Such restrictions inevitably lead to distortion, which may not serve the interests of the American people. If the public is not well-informed about armed conflicts involving its citizens, it may lend its support to a doomed effort.

The study notes that censorship disclaimers probably did little to counter U.S. officials' presentation of the conflict. Given the volume of information which is dumped on the media, journalists ought to re-examine whether such disclaimers serve any purpose. Perhaps it would serve readers better if media personnel frequently made note of censorship within the articles themselves, along with specific references to

information the military refused to provide.

The study also indicates that editorial and opinion writers may not reflect the view of officials as frequently as journalists who are on the beat. Those who write editorials and opinion pieces tend to gather their data from a wide variety of sources, and they are not subject to the convention of objectivity. The study shows that the ability to state one's opinion is irreplaceable in the media. It is one of the few buttresses journalists have against government manipulation of information.

Another area which the study details is the way various sources described nations and leaders throughout the crisis. The striking number of negative descriptions which appeared in the newspaper before and during the war shows that the major battle may have taken place in the field of public relations. In addition, the way in which Hussein used religious terminology and the pains the United States took to avoid religious conflicts in the region is shown to be linked.

The study also reveals that the *New York Times* may be more susceptible to government distortions than other publications because of its frequent use of official statements and excerpts. The publication's status as the "newspaper of record" is time-honored and helps set it apart from other papers, but is it worth the price of allowing officials to present information which may not be true?

Finally, the study delves into an area that has not been explored to a great extent: the content of news analysis pieces. Many stories labelled as "News Analysis" were influenced by official sources to a large degree. The term "analysis" suggests an in-depth look at an issue, a chance for the reporter to consider information from a variety of sources to reach a conclusion. News analysis pieces may, in fact, do readers more harm than good by presenting an official viewpoint as interpretation.

The study is primarily a content analysis of the *New York Times* before, during, and

immediately following the Persian Gulf conflict. As such, it is subject to limitations.

Although the literature review includes works which discuss the relationship between the United States and Iraq before the invasion of Kuwait, much has been written on this topic since the study was initiated. The story of this relationship was still unfolding in late 1992. Exploring the media's coverage of the Persian Gulf conflict in the context of recent findings likely would yield interesting results.

Ideas for Future Research

The media's use of official statements and transcripts. This area could be fertile ground for further research. One study could explore whether the use of such information consistently increases when the United States becomes involved in armed conflicts. Researchers also could examine whether the newspaper's utilization of official texts and excerpts from press conferences has increased over time. The latter study might shed light on how the growth of the government's public relations apparatus has affected news content in the *New York Times*.

Another line of research could delve into the use of official statements and its impact on readers. Such a study could seek to determine whether an individual's perception of events or situations is affected by frequent exposure to official texts and transcripts.

News analysis pieces. Researchers could explore this issue in more detail by examining the content of stories which are labelled "News Analysis." Studies on the use of sources in such articles could be quantitative or qualitative. Researchers could seek to determine if the use of official sources in news analysis pieces increases in wartime or remains constant.

Another study could trace the newspaper's use of news analysis articles over time:

Does the *New York Times* now attempt to analyze the news more than it did in the past? Finally, researchers could examine whether the pieces have become more dependent on outside sources, rather than relying on interpretations by media personnel.

Wartime press restrictions. The question of censorship in times of war has been a rewarding field of inquiry in the past and could yield useful information in the future. One study could seek to determine if regularly appearing censorship disclaimers have been used by the media when reporting on past wars.

More detailed research could explore the impact of various levels of press restrictions on news content. For example, a study could compare the types of sources used during the Vietnam War, when press restrictions were light, to the use of sources during the Persian Gulf war, when restrictions were tight.

The relationship between editorials and opinion pieces. One possibility for future research would be to examine the *New York Times'* stance on past conflicts involving the United States and compare it to the paper's position on the gulf crisis.

Another study could examine the relationship between the newspaper's editorial stance and positions stated in opinion pieces. For example, researchers could look at a past war, determine the newspaper's position on it, and see if it was reflected in opinion pieces written in the same period.

It also would be interesting to determine the extent to which the paper's editorial stance is expressed on the opinion page in times of peace.

Descriptions of nations and leaders. The researcher was struck by the sheer number of negative descriptions applied to the various players in the gulf conflict. It appears that the number of ways to describe a foe is bounded only by human imagination. The manner in which leaders and nations are described is a potentially rewarding field of study.

Those wishing to explore the issue further could look at descriptions and their sources from a quantitative perspective, as in Hypotheses 3 and 4. But a qualitative approach probably would be more appropriate when examining descriptions of participants in a conflict.

Researchers could try to ascertain whether certain descriptions of the United States and its opponents crop up repeatedly from one war to another, or whether they've changed over time. Other studies could examine descriptions of combatants when the United States is not directly involved in the conflict: Are the media neutral in these cases, or do they take sides based on factors such as political structures or ties to America?

The use of religious symbolism in the media. Religion has been the source of many conflicts throughout history. It would be useful to look at past conflicts between nations and see how religious symbolism was used by opposing forces in those instances. Research on the use of such symbolism in the Iran-Iraq conflict likely would yield some interesting findings. Other studies could look at how religious symbolism has been used outside of wartime, and whether its use has appeared in the media more frequently over time.

The press at war. The extent to which the media describe nations at war with the United States as "enemies" is deserving of further exploration. Researchers could examine coverage of a past war and determine the frequency with which the media described the country as an "enemy" when neutral terms were available. This figure could be compared with data found during the Desert Storm period.

Other studies could seek to determine if the frequency of "enemy" references has increased, decreased, or remained constant over time. Qualitative studies, meanwhile, could examine whether enemies now are given a more "human" face than in the past. Is

the tendency to describe opposing forces in terms of "body counts" as prevalent today as it was in the Vietnam War?

The reporting of alleged atrocities. Atrocity stories are a staple in wartime reporting. Studies could explore the issue quantitatively by looking at past conflicts between the United States and other countries and comparing the number of atrocities attributed to American forces to the number attributed to the enemy. They also could examine wars not involving the United States and compare the number of atrocities attributed to each combatant.

Qualitative research could focus on such subjects as the veracity of atrocity stories and their impact on the presentation of conflicts between nations.

Public relations and leadership. Officials use various methods to alter public perceptions of an event or situation. Qualitative studies could address this topic by comparing the styles of leaders, both in times of war and in times of peace. The way such methods have changed over time is another area worthy of exploration.

How governments are described. Researchers could examine descriptions of governments in a number of ways. Qualitative studies could compare the manner in which non-democratic nations are described to the way in which democratic countries are depicted, both in times of war and in times of peace.

Such studies could examine whether the United States' relationship to these nations has an impact on the way they are described. For example, has the Bush administration's conciliatory posture toward China affected the way that nation has been treated in the media? Other studies could look at descriptions of non-democratic countries in relation to events in the United States, such as McCarthyism or the Cold War and post-Cold War periods.

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